



## Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect Lease the Philander Chase Knox House

### Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to ensure preservation of a historic structure and grounds and to allow the community to have responsible and managed access to a historic structure.

### Project Overview

The NPS proposes to issue a Request for Proposals for leasing the Philander Chase Knox (PCK) house and certain associated grounds for use as an event space. On review of proposals, NPS will select and negotiate with a potential lessee. After the NPS and prospective lessee agree on lease terms, NPS will award a lease for a period of up to five years. To avoid interfering with existing recreational use, an approximately 22,000 square foot gravel valet-parking lot will be constructed within the former walled garden for event parking.

The lease will enable the lessee to use certain portions of the PCK house and certain grounds for events of up to 200 guests from the beginning of April through the end of October. During events, the relevant areas will be closed to use by the general public. The duration of a given event comprises one set-up day, the day of the event, and one clean-up day. The grounds will remain open to the general public on all non-event days.

### Activities Permitted under the Lease

Lessee will be authorized to use certain rooms in the PCK house and certain grounds to stage and hold events for customers of the lessee. Events could comprise meetings, parties, retreats, small conferences, and the like.

### Interior of PCK house

During events, lessee will be authorized to have exclusive use of certain rooms within the house as listed below. In periods when events are not taking place, normal operations of the NPS will continue to take place in these areas, including meetings and facilitation of volunteer projects. The house is not open to the public, except for users of the library, who must schedule visits in advance. Library use will continue on non-event days. Only the following spaces would be used by the lessee:

- Foyer
- Front Hall
- Stair Well
- Dining Room
- Dining Room Screened Porch
- Parlor
- Kitchenette and Commissary Kitchen, which could be used for final preparation and warming, but not for cooking
- Anteroom to Commissary Kitchen
- Commissary Kitchen Screened Porch

- Kitchenette Rest Room
- One Bedroom and adjoining Rest Room

No modifications by the lessee to the interior of the building will be required or permitted.

#### PCK Grounds

Lessee will be authorized to have exclusive use of the following grounds. (See Figure #.) During events, these areas will not be open to the general public.

- Library Lane. Vehicles belonging to general visitors would not be permitted on Library Lane during events. Visitors would continue to have access to Library Lane as pedestrians or while using bicycles.
- Small parking area on Library Lane. With the exception of four existing parking spaces on Library Lane opposite the PCK house, no event parking will take place on Library Lane.
- Library Lane circle. Lessee will be authorized to bring a mobile generator, mobile rest room and a mobile kitchen to this area. These facilities would be removed from the site at the conclusion of each event.
- Side yards
- Main lawn. Lessee will be authorized to erect a large tent and leveling platform, which may remain on-site during the seven-month operating period. Lessee also will be authorized to change the size of the tent as needed. The tent may only be used with the permission of the lessee.

#### New Parking Area

- An approximately 150-foot by 150-foot gravel parking area will be established within the former walled garden west of the PCK green house. Because of topography, existing structures, and existing and proposed vegetation, vehicles parked in this area will be somewhat screened from view. When no vehicles are parked here, the parking surface itself will not be visible from beyond the site.
- The new parking area will be used only for events to be staged at the PCK house. A chain gate will be placed at the entrance to the parking area to preclude parking at other times.
- When the number of vehicles expected for an event exceeds the capacity of this parking area, the overflow will be handled at the existing Knox parking lot, on Route 252 east of the Covered Bridge.
- The area will be leveled through minor cutting and filling.
- A new 10'-wide access lane will be added between Library Lane and the parking area.
- The existing paving stone path leading from the PCK house to this area will be rehabilitated.

#### Structures

- Photographs from the PCK period indicate that a mortared field-stone wall approximately 36" high was present on the east, north, and west sides of the walled garden. The wall remains, although in very poor condition, on the north and west sides only. The wall will be retained. There are no plans at this time to restore or stabilize the remaining wall.

#### Vegetation

- Six trees that have appeared within the walled garden since the PCK period will be removed.
- Two trees will be removed in order to install the access lane.
- Along the south side of the walled garden, a row of hemlocks once served as a hedge. The trees have lost all their lower branches and have no value as a screen. Additionally, they are in poor

condition. They will be removed and replaced with new shrubs, which will be managed as a screen hedge.

- No shrubs or plant beds remain in the walled garden from the PCK period. None will be added.
- The walled garden area has been managed as a rough lawn, mowed once a year. A border of lawn will be retained around all four sides of the new parking area within the walls.

#### Storm Water Management

- Currently, an east-west swale carries storm water from the field west of the walled garden, through the walled garden area, and eastward to pavement associated with the PCK Tenant house and the PCK Garage and Chauffeur's house. This unmanaged run-off causes an unsafe situation for residents and visitors. To address this, a former, now-filled swale will be re-cut around the PCK Tenant house, diverting the run-off to an existing catch basin that will take the water under Library Lane, depositing in the existing meadow for infiltration.
- Stormwater runoff from the gravel lot also will be directed to this swale.